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AUTHOR Jarmon, Leslie H.
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ABSTRACT

Taking the position that performance ethnography should be a viable and valued alternative and/or supplement to print ethnography, this paper explores ways to integrate phenomena that are visual, aural, and dynamic into existing scholarly practices. The paper advances one solution: create mechanisms for reproduction and distribution that have the advantages of printed text by using multimedia technology. The paper first discusses personal uses of performance in the practice of ethnography and elsewhere and then examines some of the critical discourse that has recently surfaced in the scholarly literature supporting the call for alternatives to print ethnography. The paper notes that one criticism of performance is that it holds great potential for self-indulgence, especially when personal narrative forms the core of the performance. It also points out that, when all is said and done, performance ethnography is also problematic for the academy largely because it simply and basically is not print. The paper then discusses the advantages of the print medium, given the kinds of work that have to get done in representing scholarly research. The paper also considers the ways in which performance, combined with multimedia technology, might be integrated into traditional practices of scholarship in an emergent, recombinant form and explores how unanticipated advantages of such an integration might accrue to those performance studies, cultural studies, and communication studies scholars involved in both research and instruction. (Contains numerous photographs of performance and 26 references.) (NKA)

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Performance Ethnography: Creating a Mechanism for Engagement by the Academy

by

E-mail: LJARMON@indiana.edu

Dr. Leslie H. Jarmon
Assistant Professor
Department of Speech Communication
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY

LESLIE H. JARMON, PH.D.
Assistant Professor

809 East Seventh Street
Bloomington, Indiana 47405-3999

Office/Voice Mail: 812-855-4195
Fax: 812-855-6014
ljarmon@indiana.edu

DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH COMMUNICATION

CS505462

809 East Seventh Street
Bloomington, Indiana
47405-3999

Information: 812-855-6389
Chairperson: 812-855-6467
Fax: 812-855-6014

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Abstract

Performance Ethnography: Creating a Mechanism for Engagement by the Academy

Performance ethnography should be a viable and *valued* alternative and/or supplement to print ethnography. Puzzle: how to integrate phenomena that are visual, aural, and dynamic into existing scholarly practices. A solution: create mechanisms for reproduction and distribution that have the advantages of printed text by using multimedia technology.

Brief History

This paper is not part of a dissertation or thesis. It has not been presented at any colloquy, conference, or convention. It does represent part of my on-going work in ethnography, performance as communicative action, and technology.

Performance Ethnography: Creating a Mechanism for Engagement by the Academy[1]

It is one thing to talk about performance as a model for cultural process, as a heuristic for understanding social life, as long as that performance-sensitive talk eventually gets "written up." The intensely performative and bodily experience of fieldwork is redeemed through writing. The hegemony of inscribed texts is never challenged by fieldwork because, after all is said and done, the final word is on paper. Print publication is the telos of fieldwork. It is interesting to note that even the most radical deconstructions still take place on the page. "Performance as a Form of Scholarly Representation" challenges the domination of textualism. (Conquergood, 1991, 190)

I showed the group a clip of the video I had shot of Michael (a young man with cerebral palsy and "subject" of the ethnography) as he was walking along a sidewalk on his crutches. I continued my lecture/performance, describing the process of Michael's collaboration with me, focusing on the patterns of his movement, explaining how we explored the behavioral topography of his palsied musculature in detail, how he taught me which muscles to tense and to relax and how to walk with crutches -- an often painful learning. Then, in real time, I performed "Michael" moving from a sitting to a standing position. (Author, 1995, notes)

In this paper, I join the conversation regarding the practice of ethnography and its forms of scholarly representation in the academy. A puzzle is how to integrate phenomena that are visual, aural, and dynamic into existing scholarly

practices. I argue that performance ethnography can and should be a viable and valued alternative and/or supplement to print ethnography, and I examine how we might begin to realize such an enterprise. As W. B. Worthen observed in his discussion of both text and performance as "unstable registers of signification," these two media "remain haunted by a desire for authorization" (23). Richard Schechner recently stressed that in "performance art, a single person may be author, director, and performer"; and, pertinent to my claims here, Schechner asserted that, "Electronic media further complicates matters, introducing its own level of performance in addition to, though not replacing, the level of 'live performing'" (1995, 37). In this discussion, I suggest that electronic media can serve practitioners and theorists of performance in critical ways within the institutional structures that frame much of the practice of academic scholarship.

In his article "Rethinking Ethnography", Dwight Conquergood sets up a specific challenge for scholars involved with or interested in performance: "Turner ... advocated, practiced, and wrote about performance as a critical method for interpreting and intensifying fieldwork data. It is quite another thing, politically, to move performance from hermeneutics to a form of scholarly representation" (1991, 190-1; my emphasis).

Performance As a Form of Scholarly Representation for Ethnography

First, I discuss briefly some of my own uses of performance in the practice of ethnography and elsewhere[2], and then I examine some of the critical discourse that has recently surfaced in the scholarly literature supporting the call for alternatives to print ethnography -- such as performance ethnography.

I argue that performance can enhance both the ethnographic process and the ethnographic product. Through the real time process of experientially learning-by-

performing, some of the features and details of a cultural activity (n aspect of a "culture") can be comprehended and assimilated into the embodied experience of the ethnographer, thereby creating opportunities to discover and to explore what might otherwise remain as hidden nuances of the activity. For example, in the ethnography referred to above, learning the details of the effort and attention required in order for Michael to stand up from a sitting position and actually learning to do and then doing that activity myself made me suddenly aware of new (for me and others) issues of time, of degree of physical exertion, and of use of space that turned out to be extremely important in Michael's day-to-day living.

It was my own performing of this action that compelled me to later ask him, for example, what he looked at as he maneuvered down the sidewalk. The occasioning of that question opened up a whole new and important area for us to explore: his reliance on a very active scanning strategy so that he might pick up any signs of small fragments of trash, bottle caps, cigarettes butts or other small objects. These objects are important players in Michael's world because his awareness of them affects the amount of energy he is continuously exerting in order to maintain balance while moving on the crutches; to fall is always a possibility even under the best of conditions and it can be very costly for him.

Performance can take the practice of ethnography into rich territory, and performance can also enhance the ethnographic product. In the performance/ lecture presentation about this ethnographic project, I used multiple media -- multiple forms of scholarly representation -- in presenting selected parts of the ethnography to that particular audience:

- in the printed handout there was a visual reproduction of Michael's actual signature, an important piece of the story he and I co-created;
- there were videotaped segments of Michael himself and of me performing "Michael" for another audience;
- in the lecture, I used my hands, arms and body several times to show where and how Michael had moved his;

- finally, I performed a specific episode of "Michael" moving from a sitting into a standing position.

As Conquergood has noted of his own work, I, too, want "to keep opening up space for nondiscursive forms" in our ethnographic endeavors (1991, 191). In a print article and working within the constraints of the genre, I can use a degree of imagistic language to artfully describe what I did, but the reader is not able to experience all the nuances of my performance and the richness and complexity of information that is conveyed through it. I join the ranks of many scholars, then, who argue in support of the role performance can play in the practice of ethnography and in the creation of new scholarly products of ethnography.

There is general consensus that performance serves the ethnographer in doing fieldwork. "Ethnography is an embodied practice; it is an intensely sensuous way of knowing"; and the body is becoming more widely recognized "as a site of knowing" for fieldwork (Conquergood, 1991, 180). But as for a performative ethnographic product, a form for which this paper would argue, Joni Jones has observed that it can provide an opportunity for engaging "how it is that culture gets done in the body" (1994, lecture notes). Many scholars argue that the body as a site of knowing is, unfortunately, absent from most traditional forms of ethnographic representation (printed texts).

There are many reasons why print ethnography as a form of scholarly representation became and has continued on as the acceptable and valued form, and some of those reasons have to do with privilege, literacy, and oppression. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., postulates that (author's emphasis):

> ... after Rene' Descartes, reason was privileged, or valorized, above all other human characteristics. Writing, especially after the printing press became so

> widespread, was taken to be the visible sign of reason. Blacks were "reasonable," and hence "men," if – and only if – they demonstrated mastery of "the arts and sciences," the eighteenth century's formula for writing. So, while the Enlightenment is characterized by its foundation on man's ability to reason, it simultaneously used the absence and presence of reason to delimit and circumscribe the very humanity of the cultures and people of color which Europeans had been "discovering" since the Renaissance. (1986, 8)

Thus, writing came to be treated as "the medium of reason's expression. We know reason by its writing, by its representations" (Gates 1986, 9; author's emphasis). For ethnographers, the written form is also the medium through which the quality of their work is assessed in the academy. As Victor Turner has observed, it is not only the fact that ethnographic reports are written but that they are written in a rigid literary genre modeled on reports in the natural sciences (1982, 84). Pratt differs only in her argument that the genre has ancestry in the "discursive configuration" trope of travel writing (1986, 34). But making the charge explicit, Conquergood claims that "published ethnographies typically have repressed bodily experience in favor of abstracted theory and analysis" (1991, 181). Even within the genres of writing available to ethnographers, after an initial foray into personal narrative in the introductory remarks, there is conventionally a shift to a more dry and distanced, generalized accounting (Pratt, 1986, 33).

Michael Jackson, ethnographer and proponent (along with Conquergood) of the notion of radical empiricism, concurs with critics of print ethnography:

> Theoretical schemes and the neutral, impersonal idioms we use in talking about them give us respite from the unmanageable flux of lived experience, helping us create illusory word-worlds which we can more easily manage

> because they are cut off from the stream of life .... Our habit of excluding the lived experience of the observer from the field of the observed ... is a stratagem for alleviating anxiety, not a rule of scientific method. (1989, 3-4)

Although still working within print, Jackson himself now experiments with story telling as the basis of his discursive style (17).

It is Conquergood who underlines the seriousness of the problem for ethnographers, characterizing it as one of temporality and denial: in "a deeply contradictory way, ethnographers go to great lengths to become cotemporal with others during fieldwork but then deny in writing that these others with whom they lived are their contemporaries" (1991, 182). Pratt flatly issues a challenge to writers of ethnography to break out of the traditional mold:

> Surely a first step toward such change is to recognize that one's tropes are neither natural nor, in many cases, native to the discipline. Then it becomes possible, if one wishes, to liberate oneself from them, not by doing away with tropes (which is not possible) but by appropriating and inventing new ones (which is). (50)

As an alternative and/or supplement to print ethnography, performance ethnography is a new, inventive, polyphonous form of representation, and it can represent features of cultural activity that require the real passing of time in order for them to be represented at all. For example, in her performance ethnography created from her experiences studying the Osun Festival in Osogbo, Nigeria (Broken Circles), Jones and the percussionist Rick Blakey collaborated in Jones' performance of a tribal dance of the Yoruba; and, naturally, it occurred in real time.

The dance was able to be appreciated in ways particular to performance only because it actually unfolded in real time. In such a manner, performance ethnography can begin to re-suture some of the disjunction between the ethnographer's "experience of cotemporality" and the professional discourse of temporal distancing in a manner print ethnography cannot. Michael Moerman has observed that:

> As we come to reckon squarely with culturally meaningful social interaction as our central phenomenon, we come to see that talk in interaction shares billing with space, with artifacts, with work, and with the visible palpable body. Talk's role is always variable and problematic, and sometimes minor. (1990-1991, 182)

In one sense, in the field, performed actions make cultural time and space where events and interactions can occur (like festival dancing, like negotiating walking down a sidewalk with cerebral palsy); and it is in another sense, in the re-creation of this made time, that certain features of culture can be brought to light for an audience -- scholarly or otherwise -- through our taking the time for performance ethnography. In their new book Performance in Life and Literature, Paul Gray and

James VanOosting summarize my point more concisely: "Performance, then, is both a method of discovery and means of demonstration .... Performance is our method of construction" (1996, 37-38).

In her feminist critique of ethnography, Judith Stacey has called for experimentation "with dialogic forms of ethnographic representation that place more of the voices and perspectives of the researched into the narrative and that more authentically reflect the dissonance and particularity of the ethnographic research process" (1991, 115). The appeal resounds with the kinds of possibilities invited by performance ethnography. Conquergood has also called for "a rethinking of identity and culture as constructed and relational" (1991, 184); in fact, he challenges conventional print ethnographic uses of the category "identity" by proclaiming that "... identity is more like a performance process than a postulate, premise, or originary principle" (185). This critique has been voiced even more strongly by psychologist Philip Cushman, who argues that the categories of identity and self belong to an indigenous, modern Western psychology:

> Knowledge production is ... an artifact of its time and is related to and in various ways unknowingly serves the particular constellation of power and privilege of that era. (1991, 207)

Published ethnographies, regardless of the rigidity of the conventional genre, are constructions and partial interpretations and, thus, they serve as dual-representations of both the Other and of the Interpreter-of-Other. James Clifford has argued that "... the simplest cultural accounts are intentional creations, ... interpreters constantly construct themselves through the others they study" (1986, 10). Stacey's call for experimentation with dialogic forms, then, invites participation by multivocal Interpreters and it simultaneously invites direct acknowledgment of

the dual functions ethnographic representations serve. Performance ethnography offers an array of representational forms for Stacey's dialogic experimentation.

A powerful example is Anna Deavere Smith's solo performance of twenty-nine characters in Fires in the Mirror. The work "is full of competing voices, every word culled from oral history interviews conducted by Smith", who then edited and learned to perform the voices by paying powerful attention to the details of their speaking (Capo, 1994, 57). Smith's work offers an audience the opportunity to imagine/experience extremely diverse perspectives enacted within the body of one person -- and this fact of performance ethnography invites an audience to consider the potential they, too, have of embodying and comprehending conflicting, paradoxical, and "Other" perspectives on experience. The taking-on of another's embodied patterns of movement and actions is a special kind of representational experience wherein mimesis and kinesis work their magic partially through the contrast of "seeing" the Other enacted through/in the body of the performer.

Smith's approach to multivocal representation is supported by Michael Jackson, who argues that the purpose of ethnography may be best characterized as a search "... for ways of opening up dialogue between people from different cultures or traditions, ways of bringing into being modes of understanding which effectively go beyond the intellectual conventions and political ideologies that circumscribe us all" (x; author's emphasis). If one objective of performance studies is to explore and enrich our understanding of one another by examining our everyday communicative performance through dialogic modes, then performance ethnography can have a particularly valuable role to play in "bringing into being" modes of understanding that both extend the dialogue while reaching out to other audiences who are not engaged by our scholarly journals. Building on Mary

Catherine Bateson's notion of a "canon of human experience" (1993, 118), Joni Jones has argued that performance ethnography "gives us new options -- it expands our human canon" (1994, lecture notes).

Nathan Stucky and Robert Hopper, co-creators of the practice of presenting staged performances of everyday life interactions, have for a decade been examining closely the patterns and details of everyday conversation. The bearing their work can have on performance ethnography is profound. According to Hopper, the "structuration of interaction order is so rich with the wisdom of evolution and the craft of human doing that our best hope is to disturb their ecology as little as possible" (1993, 182; my emphasis). For performance ethnography to succeed, as has the work of Anna Deavere Smith, performances must bear up to certain standards of accountability and excellence. Stucky underlines the fact that the task undertaken by performers of everyday life is, therefore, not an easy one nor one whose scholarship is to be lightly valued:

> If we are to understand human diversity, and if natural performance is to bring the full power of its art to this endeavor, then the ways in which people perform their everyday lives will continue to be a significant challenge for performers. (1993, 177)

Therefore, experimentation in modes of representation, including performance ethnography, is being called for by ethnographers deeply concerned with the contradictions inherent in current practices. There have been various attempts at (especially textual) experimentation (see Writing Culture). But as bell hooks has observed, "Many of us experiment only to find that such work receives absolutely no attention" (1990, 129).

Performance: Why Is It Problematic for the Academy?

There has been a call for a revolution -- or perhaps for a transformation of the ways in which ethnographers create our scholarly representations. But let us examine some of the specific kinds of challenges that performance as a form of representation presents to current practices.

One criticism has been that performance holds great potential for self-indulgence, especially when personal narrative forms the core of the performance. However, what James Clifford has pointed out as true for dialogic modes holds true for the multimodal form of performance as well -- there is nothing in the form that inherently invites self-indulgence:

> Dialogical modes are not, in principle, autobiographical; they need not lead to hyper self-consciousness or self-absorption ... Once dialogism and polyphony are recognized as modes of textual production, monophonic authority is questioned, revealed to be characteristic of a science that has claimed to represent cultures. (15; my emphasis)

The problem, then, may lie more in a discomforting critique of convention and authority than in the threat of potential displays of self-indulgence. Conquergood has observed the existence of a check against any potential for self-indulgence and that is conceiving of the "other-as-interlocuter", especially if the Other is to some degree co-designer of and participant in the performance (1991, 182). Similar "dangers" of self-indulgence are as prevalent in the practices of theatre, therapy, and shamanism; yet these cultural activities continue to persist. Perhaps the danger has been overplayed.

Stephen A. Tyler has argued for a polyphonic presence in the products of ethnographic work and he, too, questions the current forms of scholarly

representation: "Polyphony is a means of perspectival relativity ... The point is that questions of form are not prior, the form itself should emerge out of the joint work of the ethnographer and his native partners" (1986, 127). Ethnography can perform a therapeutic purpose, according to Tyler, when it is able to evoke "a participatory reality ..." (128-9). Through the participatory reality that can be generated by performance ethnography, communicative, therapeutic, and educational connections can be created. Gray and VanOosting state the case explicitly:

> We learn about others by performing them, by walking and talking, gesturing and moving, thinking and acting as they do. (119)

and

> Such mimicry is the root impulse of performance, accruing insight and knowledge both for an audience and for the performers themselves. (319)

Victor Turner makes the same kind of appeal in his essay on "Performance and Reflexive Anthropology": "I've long thought that teaching and learning anthropology should be more fun than they often are. Perhaps we should not merely read and comment on ethnographies but actually perform them" (1982, 83). Victor and Edith Turner, during a remarkable two-week workshop in the early 1980s, collaborated with Alexander Alland, Erving Goffman, and Richard Schechner. Working with students, they converted parts of an ethnography into a playscript, the script into rehearsals for a performance, weaving throughout the process their meta-discussions of the ethnography "armed with the understanding that comes from getting inside the skin of members of other cultures" (84). Even the ethnography itself (Turner's writing on the Ndembu culture) came under fire during the rehearsal/learning process. A powerful argument for performance

ethnography -- and perhaps one explanation for the apparent reluctance by the Academy to embrace it -- comes from this renowned ethnographer who himself actively engaged performance as a form of representation:

> There is nothing like acting the part of a member of another culture in a crisis situation characteristic of that culture to detect inauthenticity in the reporting usually made by Westerners and to raise problems undiscussed or unresolved in the ethnographic narrative. (94)

Conquergood has added to Turner's list of problems with the ethnographic narrative and considers new problems invited by performative alternatives: "What about enabling the people themselves to perform their own experience? What are the epistemological underpinnings and institutional practices that would legitimate performance as a complementary form of research?" (1991, 190). Performance takes place in a certain place, at certain times; part of its power lies in its use of the co-presence of performer with viewer. It is dialogic and unfolds sequentially in real time (although it may represent time in other ways). The reviewer of an ethnographic performance cannot turn back to "page twelve" or re-focus on a particular description more carefully. The moment (and the "document" to be reviewed) is gone.

These indeed are serious problems; but Conquergood maintains that performance ethnography is worth the attempt because "... experiential performance sometimes resists, exceeds, and overwhelms the constraints and strictures of writing" (1991, 193). Furthermore, it has been argued that the underlying problems of scholarly verification are not limited to "performance" as a representational form. James Clifford has raised questions that apply to print ethnography as well:

> Ethnographic truths are ... inherently partial -- committed and

> incomplete. (7)

and

> ... the confrontation raises thorny problems of verification: how are the truths of cultural accounts evaluated? Who has the authority to separate science from art? realism from fantasy? knowledge from ideology? Of course such separations will continue to be maintained, and redrawn; but their changing poetic and political grounds will be less easily ignored. In cultural studies at least, we can no longer know the whole truth, or even claim to approach it. (25)

Raising similar questions, Vincent Crapanzano has critiqued the authority of Geertz's ethnographic essay "Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight" (1986, 68-76).

The difficulties are with the assumptions underlying the very practices of scholarly ethnography itself, practices of assessment and peer review. Clifford has declared that "... concrete institutional forces -- tenure patterns, canons, the influence of disciplinary authorities, global inequalities of power" can no longer be ignored (21).

Finally, when all is said and done, performance ethnography is also problematic for the academy largely because it simply and basically is <u>not</u> print. Conquergood, again, makes the observation explicit for performance studies scholars and ethnographers alike, and he invokes Michael Jackson's powerful concept of radical empiricism:

> In the quest for intellectual respectability through disciplinary rigor, some communication and rhetorical scholars have narrowed their focus to language, particularly those aspects of language that can be spatialized on the page, or measured and counted, to the exclusion of embodied meanings that

> are accessible through ethnographic methods of "radical empiricism" (Jackson, 1989). (1991, 188)

Conquergood -- and I -- would have us "resist, exceed, and overwhelm the constraints and strictures of writing" through experiential performance as a form of scholarly representation (193). The logic is clear and the arguments are important; but these alone do not help us with the problem of the academy's acceptance of performance ethnography as a scholarly form of representation. Gates has pointed out in his critical analysis of Western privilege given to writing (author's emphasis): "Without writing, no repeatable sign of the workings of reason and mind could exist" (11). And I will argue next that it is precisely this repeatable nature of the written form that has contributed to its establishment and maintenance in its privileged status as the preferred form for scholarly representation.

Advantages of Print Medium, Given the Kinds of Work That Have to Get Done in Representing Scholarly Research (and Visa-Versa)

There are advantages to print as a medium, especially when one considers the practice of representing and assessing scholarly ethnography. In fact, it is probable that the development of the system of activities associated with scholarly publishing, peer reviews, and so forth emerged as it has because print has been the form available to scholars; so, the system of conventional practices (argued against earlier) has maintained itself accordingly. Stephen Tyler has observed that, "As the suffix -graphy implies, "ethnography itself is contextualized by a technology of written communication" (122).

My analysis might appear mundane, yet I believe it addresses certain underlying realities about the form of representation we conventionally utilize: Print, as a form of scholarly representation, has offered (and continues to offer) us

several kinds of advantages, especially in terms of our ability to manipulate its physical instantiation.

Applicable to performance scholarship as well, Conquergood's claim and challenge are that the "linguistic and textualist bias of speech communication has blinded many scholars to the preeminently rhetorical nature of cultural performance" (1991, 188). But perhaps it is not so much a problem of blindness as it is the frustrating difficulty of producing and reproducing representations of these kinds of important and pervasive cultural phenomena -- performative phenomena -- for peer review and assessment. So inevitably what most gets reported are those aspects of ethnography that best lend themselves to a print medium of representation and interpretation.

While I am both a supporter of and an adamant believer in the ethical and political critiques presented by Conquergood, Gates, and others discussed earlier, I wish to approach the problem of "performance as a form of scholarly representation" from a different perspective entirely with the hope that we might move ahead whether or not all the challenges of the critiques have been addressed. Let us acknowledge (even celebrate) textualism's entrenched status as the dominant form of scholarly representation and consider some of the advantages to scholarly discourse that have been afforded by not only by print ethnography but by print forms of most scholarly representations across the fields embraced by performance studies.

What is necessary for the assessment of scholarly work? To oversimplify, typically the scholar must submit the work to a respected forum for review. Then the process requires that some number of selectively chosen and informed peers, each of whom must have access to the work, will be able to engage/review the work

at their own speed, within the time-constraints of a particular publishing cycle. To make a mundane but critical point: all of these steps require that "the work" be reproducible in the first place. As Gates observed, "Without writing no repeatable sign of the workings of reason, of mind, could exist" (11).

The advantages of print include its flexibility, reproducibility, reliability, durability, and distributability, all at relatively low costs. There has been an almost worldwide development of physical, social and economic infrastructure that supports the use of printed texts. Western-style academic enterprises have evolved accordingly, establishing print as the preferred form of representation. The document itself has certain qualities: it is graspable in the hand, portable, one can repeat what one has just read, one can read quickly or, then again, examine a passage very slowly; and all of these qualities make of the document an object that is feasibly peer-reviewable. Furthermore, what one reviewer receives to read is what another receives to read; the ethnographic representation has been reproduced and distributed. Finally, print, unlike performance, is a random access medium, "browsable and changeable, no longer dependent on time or day, or the time required for delivery" (Negroponte 1995, 50). It can be used in both research and in instruction; and as Tamar Katriel has observed, the ethnographer performs the roles of participant, interviewer, observer, writer, and teacher (1990-1991, 190).

The Puzzle: Integrating Performance into Existing Scholarly Practices and A Solution: Creating Mechanisms for Reproduction Using Multimedia Technology

I offer here only a single, pragmatic approach to our puzzle: how to move performance from "hermeneutics to a form of scholarly representation;" I do not pretend to address much of what is problematic for many about print ethnography. If, as Conquergood has suggested, this is "the most deeply subversive and threatening" move we could make for "the text-bound structure of the academy", so be it (1991, 190). I believe it will be both a less threatening and a more productive move than we have yet imagined. The focus of past critique has been on the domination of textualism, and on the political will required to change the hegemonic role of printed text (Conquergood, Gates, Tyler). The "wall" constructed by such characterizations of our field has felt impenetrable. What is left to one to do? Is this really the way things are?

Maybe. But almost a decade ago, in a presentation to the Speech Communication Association in Salado, Texas, Conquergood himself provided evidence that there were already fractures in the wall:

> The good news is that never before has the intellectual climate been so supportive and facilitating for the field of interpretation and performance studies. I am old enough to remember chillier times, when the cold prevailing winds of scientific positivism blasted expressive and interpretive forms of life ... (1986, 2)

In Gates' critique of writing cited earlier, there appears an inadvertent slippage pointing to a felicitous aperture for accepting alternatives to writing in his assertion

that "We know reason by its writing, by its representations" (9; my emphasis). Can the scholarly reasoning of the ethnographer be made known to us by other forms of representation, by performance ethnography, for instance?

In a word, yes; and in answering that question, I wish to redirect our focus. Without in any way diminishing the seriousness of the ideological and social issues raised by many of the previously cited scholars (and sharing in much of their critique), I ask that we make a turn in the path and embrace the puzzle from a different perspective. Let us ask a different question: What if performance ethnography was , in a sense, reproducible?

Let us consider the ways in which performance -- combined with multimedia technology -- might be integrated into our traditional practices of scholarship in an emergent, recombinant form; and let us explore how unanticipated advantages of such an integration might accrue to those performance studies, cultural studies, and communication studies scholars involved in both research and instruction -- and to ethnographers in particular. I would hope to dispel some of the anxiety created by the new forms by proposing that we begin to proceed with the actual creation and distribution of prototype materials out into the field before having to prescribe exactly what problems might be encountered. Some things are certain: there will be problems and advantages, and both will most likely be of a nature we have not precisely anticipated. This is supposed to be transformation of a sort, after all; and what is desired are more modalities of representation, not fewer.

When all is said and done, we need not necessarily "fear the collapse of clear standards of verification" (Clifford 1986, 7). Tyler has described one of the ideal forms of a postmodern ethnographic project: "We better understand the ethnographic context as one of cooperative story making that, in one of its ideal

forms, would result in a polyphonic text" (126). Such a text or representational form is now realizable through ethnographic performance combined with multimedia technology, especially digital technology. Recall Stacey's appeal for experimentation "with dialogic forms of ethnographic representation that place more of the voices and perspectives of the researched into the narrative and that more authentically reflect the dissonance and particularity of the ethnographic research process" (115). Performance ethnography can begin to address such issues, and multimedia technology can begin to make the new "texts" available throughout the field and to a wider audience beyond.

I will not attempt to explore here all dimensions of multimedia and digital technology; what I do want to comment on is the convergence of performance ethnography and multimedia technology. Both use multiple forms of representation to show and tell, and both can offer to the acquisition and representation of knowledge what other media individually cannot: embodied kinesthetic information that can be multi-perspectival, multi-temporal, and multi-sensory.

I contend that the first and by far the most complex multimedia producers and consumers are, after all, us. Elsewhere I have argued that there are some special capabilities offered by the new multimedia technologies that have crucial implications for those who conduct any kind of research into and teach about human interaction; I mention here the main points:

- Digitized multimedia technology provides us with the capacity to rapidly create other-than-textual representations of observable and empirically researchable phenomena in the universe of human interaction.

- These new digitized visual and audio representations can be rapidly recognizable, accessible, and creatively manipulatable in ways that allow researchers to empirically and analytically engage the phenomena in powerful new ways (multi-temporally and multi-perspectively).

Critics have called for "the evidences of sound and interlocution" (Clifford 1986, 11). Turner's students in the summer workshop wanted to use multimedia (film) as a backdrop to relay important aspects of the story/culture that were not displayed in the on-going fore-grounded action (94); and Turner designed a plan for how ethnographic performances might be created relying on collaboration from members of other disciplines. But the problem of reproduction remained.

The point is that one wants to be able to free the performance from some of its constraints by creating a product that presents the viewer/reviewer with some of the same options made available by print: one wants a random access medium that is "browsable and changeable, no longer dependent on time or day, or the time required for delivery," and other features mentioned earlier by Negroponte (50), Professor of Media Technology at M.I.T. Videotape accomplishes some of these; digitizing the material (converting it to computer-readable bits) moves beyond the random access provided even by print medium.

First, then, at the very least, one can videotape performances. Next, many options open up for the performance ethnographer, and the list offered here is minimal. The simplest but not necessarily the best option is to duplicate the videotape-as-is for submission. This can perhaps serve for tenure review situations but is still unfeasible for submission for publishing until institutional mechanisms are created and put into place (which could be relatively soon; see below) to edit and publish some thing like a video journal. Raw videotape of a performance can be

edited into a "video essay" including interviews, text, music and other elements that were not necessarily part of the actual performance. The tape (or parts of it) can be digitized and the ethnographic multimedia essay can be created on a computer, interspersing a wide variety of multimedia components and manipulating aspects of all of them in ways not possible on analog videotape. This final "work" can be submitted electronically to an electronic journal, posted on the Internet on a home page, sent by electronic-mail to all members of a review board, downloaded onto videotape for more conventional duplication, or edited for downloading into printed text medium. The layers can be polyphonic, multiperspectival, and multitemporal.

Using multimedia technology to create interpretive reproductions or facsimiles of an ephemeral and unrepeatable one-time performance creates a "document" that can share certain qualities with our print document: it becomes manipulatable with the hand (through toggle switch on a VCR, a mouse, or computer arrow keys), portable (one can copy a video or call up a file on the computer), one can do "repeat-reading" or viewing, at varying speeds, and what one reviewer receives to examine is precisely like that of another reviewer. Multimedia can include mixtures of text and non-discursive modes: hypermedia. Particular prototype projects for a journal could include:

- video journal issue (and it can be accompanied by and include text)
- published CD-ROM issue
- electronic issues on Internet (interactive)
- a "home page" on the World Wide Web (with subscription form)
- vertical and horizontal integration for research and instruction:

* to videotape
* to audiotape
* to print (hard copy) with audio/videocassette

Images can be imported quite inexpensively into text for accompanying literature and for handouts. In addition, performances can be staged (and recorded) on-line over the Internet through advanced tele-conferencing; performance ethnography might no longer be restricted to one co-present audience, but be made available to a "cyber-audience" -- co-temporaneous if not co-present.

Many experimenters are already hard at work. Simply utilizing the reproductive benefits of videotape, Anna Deavere Smith's Fires in the Mirror has become part of the instructional materials for many courses. With the electronic publishing opportunities available now (and there will be more very soon), ethnographies may no longer typically repress "bodily experience in favor of abstracted theory and analysis", as Conquergood has charged (181). Theory and analysis are not to be discontinued, but rather may be accomplished through performance ethnography by the natural and historically situated "subjects" themselves as well as by the ethnographer. Together, they might be able to represent in selective detail those interactive aspects of the culture and cultural patterns of behavior which those involved in the ethnography themselves desire to mark as particularly salient.

Conclusion

I began this paper with a citation from Conquergood and will close with another:

> The Performance Paradigm will be most useful if it decenters, without discarding, texts. I do not imagine life in a university without books, nor do I have any wish to stop writing myself. But I do want

> to keep thinking about what gets lost and muted in texts. And I want to think about performance as a complement, alternative, supplement, and critique of inscribed texts. Following Turner and others, I want to keep opening up space for nondiscursive forms, and encouraging research and writing practices that are performance-sensitive. (1991, 191)

For his own work, Conquergood stated (1991, 186) that he received much inspiration from Bakhtin's assertion that "the most intense and productive life of culture takes place on the boundaries ..." (1986, 2). I, too, have been inspired by Bakhtin's statement, and so now I wish to call for interested scholars to actively engage ourselves in the new activities unfolding on the boundaries of our field of performance studies -- especially beyond our inscribed texts. Let us begin to actively pursue, for example, performance ethnography projects and at the same time embrace the possibilities offered by digital multimedia technology. Many have already begun experiments in both of these directions, although few have yet attempted to create a new, recombinant form that makes use of both.

Ethnography, and performance ethnography in particular, combined with publishing innovations invited by new multimedia technologies, offer a potential site for explosive discovery and learning. At the 1994 Speech Communication Association Conference in New Orleans, Paul Ferguson and his colleagues were received by an appreciative audience when they unveiled a prototype Performance Video Journal, a non-print journal complete with interviews, video clips from performances interwoven with narration, music, text, and a variety of styles of multimedia presentation. This kind of ground-breaking project, combined with other prototypes being developed for digital multimedia publications and for

distribution over the Internet, offer glimpses of the kinds of research and instruction opportunities that face communication scholars.

Scanning the broader territory, one observes that the national infrastructure is also moving toward more multimedia capability; according to Nicholas Negroponte:

> ...computers are becoming more and more video enabled, equipped to process and display video as a data type. For tele-conferencing, multimedia publications, and a host of simulation applications, video is becoming part of all, not just many, computers. (1995, 48)

The institutional infrastructure is moving toward more digital multimedia capability as well. For example, The Drama Review already requests that submissions be made on floppy disk, and many journals are making plans for publishing CD-ROM archives of past publications. One can imagine the kinds of repercussions for scholarship when the availability of ethnographic materials (and performances) is no longer restricted only to those institutions of higher learning equipped with extensive libraries or well-equipped performance spaces.

It is important to note that the implications of digital reproduction adhere to other areas of communication studies than ethnography. Consider the value it can have for researchers in cultural studies, speech and political communication, mass media, and in any area where the visual and aural elements of the particular instances of a phenomenon under examination can be reproduced and distributed among colleagues, students, and a wider public audience for review and instruction.

A final word: if we believe, as I do, that it is worth the effort and the risk to pursue this recombination of ethnography and performance ethnography with the new multimedia technologies, then let's just start (or continue) doing it with vigor and see what emerges. It will require new learning for many of us; but helping to build the mechanisms for the acceptance of performance ethnography is an inviting challenge, and at this time the climate is particularly felicitous for institutional collaboration. In this paper, I have merely tried to offer some possible steps toward meeting that challenge.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Dr. Joni Jones and Dr. Robert Hopper for their encouragement concerning this project and my continuing investigation of ethnography: how performance and multimedia technologies can be used as resources in the practice of analysis and in the presentation of findings.

2. See [Author] (1996): "Performance as a Resource in the Practice of Conversation Analysis." Text and Performance Quarterly (in press). In this paper I examine the fact that performance is frequently used as an analytical tool in group analysis sessions by researchers studying the micro details of everyday conversation. I refer to their practice as performed analysis, and I explore the details of the ways that these researchers actually utilize performance to accomplish analytical tasks as well as other interactional work.

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